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AN  
ADDRESS  
TO  
PROPRIETORS  
OF  
IRISH ESTATES,  
RESIDING IN  
GREAT BRITAIN.

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**A D D R E S S,**

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*THE Managers of a Scheme for diffeminating the  
HOLY SCRIPTURES, amongst the Lower Classes in  
IRELAND, beg leave to Address such PROPRIETORS  
of IRISH ESTATES as are generally resident  
in GREAT BRITAIN.*

**W**E Address you, because the assistance which  
opulence can easily supply is all that is now ne-  
cessary to the full completion of our design.  
Already more than five thousand Bibles have  
been distributed at reduced prices; and in most  
instances have been purchased with such avidity,  
as to satisfy us fully of the Utility of the under-  
taking. We wish therefore if possible to carry  
on our design, until every Cottage where there  
is a single person who can read shall be furnish-  
ed with the Holy Scriptures.

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You scarcely need to be informed, that the circumstances of this Country are peculiarly unfavourable to the spreading of Religious Instruction. The lower peasantry being chiefly Roman Catholics, a very limited sphere is left for the labours of the established Clergy; and where their exertions are most needed, *there* peculiarly, they will not be accepted of. The distribution of Religious Tracts in general is equally fruitless; Protestantism, in whatever form, being an interdicted commodity. Attempts have been made to circulate pious and instructive tracts written by divines of their own communion; but even these liberal efforts have proved ineffectual. The only remaining expedient therefore is to disseminate the Holy Scriptures alone. These we know by experience will be received and read not only by Protestants but by Roman Catholics. Of this fact we have had abundant, and indeed most interesting, proofs in our dissemination hitherto.

Is it not then a matter of urgent duty to meet this disposition of the lower classes and to furnish them with that Religious Instruction for which they



they thus shew themselves to be athirst? The question is not now, whether the lower classes shall or shall not be taught to read. Let this attainment be an injury or a benefit, they are acquiring and will acquire it, independently of our aid, and even in spite of any possible endeavours to the contrary. But the real question is, shall they who can already read, be provided with the means of pure unmixed Religious Knowledge, or shall they be left to employ their faculty of reading in perusing ribaldry and learning profanity? Nay more—the question is, shall they, who from that concern for Religion which God has planted in every bosom, wish to be possessed of the word of God, be gratified in that wish, or shall they be left to sink yet deeper in that barbarism, from which their desire for the Holy Scriptures indicates already a disposition to emerge.

It is a melancholy truth, that the Irish vulgar are in too many instances bloody and ferocious, retaining the habits and the feelings of Savages, devoid of lasting gratitude, and ready, at the impulse of any groundless resentment, to exercise the most unrelenting cruelty, where shortly be-

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fore they had professed the most affectionate attachment. Are they to be left in this state? Is no effort to be made to humanize them? On the contrary should not every expedient that either honest policy or pure Religion can furnish be instantly resorted to, in order if possible to introduce amongst them the habits and the principles of rational beings, and of Christians?

The change from Savageness to Civilization has been too often realized to be any where despaired of. But it must begin somewhere.—Some impregnating principle must be introduced, by the extension and increasing influence of which the happy transformation may be at length effected. Whatever other means may be deemed conducive to this end, the humanizing power of the Christian Religion will we trust be universally admitted. If it could be doubted, the civilization of modern Europe would furnish the most irrefragable proof. But the Christian Religion can only be extended by the diffusion of Christian knowledge. And of this, as has been already observed, we have, with respect to the far greater part of the lower classes, but one means—the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures.

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Our adoption therefore of this single expedient is no longer matter for deliberation, but of urgent indispensable necessity.

Of this means, however, we have no ground to doubt the efficacy. Reason as well as piety will suggest to us, that when God has thought fit to make use of written records, for communicating his will to different Ages and Nations, his blessing may be expected to attend those records and give effect to their perusal. But in addition to this, we have the strongest matter of fact to encourage us. From the Histories of the Reformation we learn, that nothing so powerfully contributed to bring about that amazing change in men's minds, as the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures. The first link in that providential chain was Luther's finding an old Latin Bible in the Library of his Convent. What had opened his own eyes he of course was eager to communicate to others; and the consequence was, that wherever the light of Scripture came, the darkness of superstition fled before it.

But they who are intimately acquainted with the Holy Scriptures will require no arguments  
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to convince them of their divine energy as a means of instruction—because they cannot fail to discover in those Sacred Books certain peculiar characteristics, which distinguish them from all the other compositions in the World; and which prove it to have been the intention of the Divine Inspirer to fit them in an extraordinary manner for attracting and enlightening the young and uninformed classes of Society in every Age and Nation.

They will trace this gracious design in that delightful intermixture of the most important instruction with the most engaging narrative, which runs through so large a part of the Sacred volume—in the frequent use of allegory at once the most simple and the most striking—and in that peculiar method of inculcating moral and religious duties, by short ardent affectionate addresses, which require no penetration to discover their drift, which inform the mind almost without the labour of thought, and lay hold on the heart, by an energy scarcely to be resisted.

They will see the same intention in that unexampled wisdom, with which the precepts of  
Scripture,



Scripture, are directed to the cardinal points of personal and social conduct—so as to regulate minuter instances without the necessity of detail, and to bring down, in a manner infinitely beyond what Socrates himself could have effected, the sublimest principles of genuine philosophy into the daily walks of Men, and the occupations of common life—teaching Husbands and Wives, Parents and Children, Masters and Servants, the things which belong not only to their eternal but even to their domestic peace, with a provident condescension, worthy of Him who feeds the Sparrows, and adorns the Lillies.

In these distinguishing features will the intelligent readers of the Sacred Volume both feel and acknowledge the wisdom and the goodness of God. They will perceive that it was His gracious purpose to make the records of His will as captivating to the imagination, as they are beneficial to the mind and heart—and to provide for their utility by ensuring their popularity. On these grounds they will rejoice to co-operate with the Divine appointment in giving the most extensive circulation to what is so transcendently fitted for universal advantage.

“I have

“I have repeatedly,” says Sir William Jones,  
 “read over the Holy Scriptures; and I am of  
 “opinion, that this volume, independently of its  
 “Divine origin, contains more sublimity and  
 “beauty, more pure morality, more important  
 “history and finer strains of poetry and elo-  
 “quence, than can be collected from all other  
 “books, in whatever age or language they have  
 “been composed.” Such a suffrage from so  
 accomplished a Scholar, who had explored all  
 the recesses, not only of Greek and Roman Lite-  
 rature, but of all that is valuable amongst the  
 Arabians, the Persians, and the Hindoos, is an  
 important addition to the testimonies already  
 given by so many of the best and wisest of Men  
 to the infinite worth of the Sacred Volume; and it  
 is the more interesting, as the warmth with which  
 he speaks clearly evinces the strongest feeling and  
 the most heightened admiration.

And let it be observed, that it is a suffrage  
 strongly in favour of the universal circulation of  
 the Holy Scriptures. The excellencies which are  
 here enumerated are not attractive merely to the  
 learned reader. They have perhaps a still stronger  
 influence on unlettered and uncultivated minds.

Eloquence

Eloquence and poetry—the glowing metaphor and the apt and pleasing allegory have very little to do with the reasoning faculty, while they strongly interest the imagination and the feelings; and where the understanding has been least exercised, and the mental force of course resides chiefly in the imagination and the affections, the modes of address which are furnished by a lively fancy and a warm heart, will be the aptest to make an impression. This is exemplified in almost every Savage tribe; the first efforts of whose minds, run uniformly in the line of eloquence and poetry. And the same rule holds with respect to the lower classes in civilized communities, whom we always see more easily wrought upon by an illustration than by an argument; they can feel where they cannot reason—and they shew themselves capable of relishing what they are utterly unable to explain. Where therefore sublime and beautiful ideas are *simple and natural*, (as they ever must be when they are perfect, and as they are most transcendently in the Holy Scriptures,) their effect upon uncultivated minds, will perhaps be even greater than on the mind of the most improved academician. In this view the opinion of Sir William Jones, gives the strongest confirmation

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to what has been already insisted on—that of all books which have been composed in whatever age or language, the Bible is infinitely the best adapted for conveying the most captivating and the most beneficial instruction to every age, rank and description in society.

The effect of mere human compositions when read with attention and frequency, particularly in early youth, has often been considerable. Sentiments, thus introduced, have frequently grown up into habits and have given the happiest direction to the whole conduct of life. What then may we not reasonably look for from those inimitable lessons and examples of truth, of justice, of piety, of gentleness, of meekness and of humanity, which every where occur in the sacred volume? They who are now in the mid career of life, may for the present in too many instances, not be brought to attend to them—but a period will come when even these will be glad to have the Scriptures in their possession, that they may turn to them for consolation—and in the mean time the young will read them even for amusement.—But can they be read without communicating some portion



portion of benefit—without insinuating something that may serve to restrain the passions and soften the manners—without lodging some seed, which “in an honest and good heart may bring forth fruit to life eternal”?—We know that in the lowest classes there are frequent instances of minds endowed with uncommon powers—and of imaginations full of activity and ardour—we know too from our own painful experience, that such minds and such imaginations are, if left to themselves, the aptest receptacles of vice and the readiest instruments of mischief.—But by what means can we so fairly hope, not only to prevent their ruin, but even to form them to virtue and happiness, as by an early acquaintance with those sacred oracles through whose guidance so many even of the lowest and most despised ranks of society have been enabled “to adorn the Doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.”

But the sacred volume, in addition to its intrinsic excellence, carries with it a weight of divine authority which few minds are stubborn enough entirely to resist. Its admirable qualities have been but hinted at; for they arise above all description, and can only be adequately conceived

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by Him, who reads at once with cultivated taste, with classical information and with humble, ardent piety. But the advantage which the Bible possesses, of bearing the acknowledged stamp of Heaven—of being the irrefragable manifestation of God's will to his rational creatures, raises it with respect to practical efficacy infinitely above all that ever came from the pen of man; and makes it a means for working on the public mind, of such invaluable importance, as to render it doubtful whether they who neglect to give it the utmost possible circulation, are more impious, or impolitic—more insensible to their own interests, or more ungrateful to their God.

Under these impressions we have engaged in the design which we have stated; and confident that the same motives will have force with all good men, we take the liberty of applying to you. You have a common interest with us, in promoting the tranquillity of Ireland;—on every ground of justice, you owe attention to the Country, from whence you derive so large a portion of your wealth; and perhaps in no other possible way could that attention be so effectually exercised.

cised at so small an expence. But we trust you will be influenced by a still nobler motive—the broad and liberal principle of Christian Charity; and that because you yourselves have a just value for the word of God, and a generous concern for the best interests of your Fellow Creatures, you will, on the present occasion, feel with us, and rejoice to assist us.



*The following MEMBERS of the ASSOCIATION, for promoting RELIGION and VIRTUE, have undertaken to conduct the above Scheme, and to apply such Sums as may be contributed to the proposed object :*

The Lord Bishop of Meath,  
 Lord Bishop of Ferns,  
 Lord Bishop of Cork,  
 Lord Bishop of Ossory,  
 Lord Bishop of Killalla.

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 Rev. George Graydon,  
 Rev. Jos. Stopford, F. T. C. D.  
 Alexander Knox, Esq.  
 Mr. Wm. Watson, senr.

**DONATIONS and SUBSCRIPTIONS** for the above  
purpose will be received at the Bank of Messrs.  
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Rivington's, Bookseller, *St. Paul's Church-Yard*.  
In *Dublin*, at the Bank of Messrs. Latouche, and  
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THOSE public calamities which for a time, impeded the progress of the plan for the further distribution of Bibles to the Poor at reduced prices, being now, through the Divine mercy, in a considerable degree removed, the Association have contracted with the King's Printer for a large number of a new edition of octavo Bibles, which is in considerable forwardness. They have therefore lately opened a new subscription, which already stands as follows, VIZ.

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The following members of the Aſſociation have undertaken to conduct the above ſcheme, and to apply ſuch ſums as may be contributed to the purpoſed object.

*Committee for promoting the Diſtribution of Bibles.*  
*Elected 20th November, 1800.*

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